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SUBJECT: IRAQI CLERGY CALL FOR RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC
COEXISTENCE IN NEW IRAQ

1. (SBU) LOOKING TO LAY DOWN SOME MARKERS ON IRAQ'S RELIGIOUS FUTURE, THE HOLY SEE FORWARDED TO POST UNDER DIPLOMATIC NOTE A COPY OF A DECLARATION ISSUED BY THE IRAQI PATRIARCHS AND BISHOPS (I.E. OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC, CHALDEAN, AND EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES) ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN IRAQ. THE DECLARATION, SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED PUBLICLY BY THE VATICAN, CITES THE UN CHARTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND APPEALS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FREE AND TOLERANT SOCIETY IN THE IRAQI TRADITION OF "RESPECT FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-ETHNIC COEXISTENCE." AN INFORMAL EMBASSY TRANSLATION FOLLOWS.

2.(U) BEGIN TEXT:

DECLARATION OF THE PATRIARCHS AND BISHOPS OF IRAQ

"AT THIS MOMENT WHEN IRAQ IS TURNING A PAGE AND IS BEGINNING A NEW CHAPTER IN HER MILLENNARY LIFE, WE, THE PATRIARCHS AND BISHOPS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN IRAQ, DRIVEN ALSO BY PRESSURE FROM OUR FAITHFUL, WISH TO EXPRESS OUR ASPIRATIONS RELATIVE TO THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY, IN THE HOPE THAT THE IRAQI PEOPLE, WHICH HAS HAD A LONG HISTORY MARKED BY DEFEATS AND SUCCESSES, WILL BE ABLE, WITHOUT RELIGIOUS OR ETHNIC DISTINCTION, TO LIVE IN FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND RESPECT FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS AND MULTIETHNIC COEXISTENCE."

- WHEN HAMMURABI SCULPTED HIS CODE ON THE STONE OF THIS LAND, LAW BECAME THE BASIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION."

- WHEN ABRAHAM LOOKED AT THE HEAVENS ABOVE UR THEY OPENED UP TO HIM AND, BY THIS REVELATION, ABRAHAM BECAME THE FATHER OF A MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE."

- WHEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM MET, THEIR RESPECTIVE "HOLY ONES" BEGAN THE TWO RELIGIONS IN RESPECTFUL AND RECIPROCAL CO-EXISTENCE."

"IN ADDITION, BY VIRTUE OF OUR ORIGINAL RIGHT OF BELONGING TO THE MOST ANCIENT PEOPLES OF THIS LAND, WE CLAIM FOR OURSELVES AND FOR ALL THOSE WHO LIVE IN IT TODAY, WHETHER A MAJORITY OR MINORITY, UNITED BY A LONG HISTORY OF COEXISTENCE, THE FULL RIGHT OF LIVING IN A STATE OF LAW, IN PEACE, FREEDOM, JUSTICE, IN EQUALITY, ACCORDING TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER. CONSEQUENTLY -- WE, CHALDEANS, ASSYRIANS, SYRIANS, ARMENIANS, GREEKS, AND LATINS -- FORMING TOGETHER ONE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, ASK THAT THE NEW IRAQI CONSTITUTION:

- RECOGNIZE OUR RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL RIGHTS;

- ENVISION A STATUTE LAW IN WHICH EACH PERSON WILL BE CONSIDERED ACCORDING TO THEIR CAPABILITIES WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION, SO THAT EACH MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE PART ACTIVELY IN THE GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE OF THIS COUNTRY;

- CONSIDER THE CHRISTIANS AS IRAQI CITIZENS WITH FULL RIGHTS;

- GUARANTEE TO US THE RIGHT TO PROFESS OUR FAITH ACCORDING TO OUR ANCIENT TRADITIONS AND OUR RELIGIOUS LAW, THE RIGHT TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN ACCORDING TO CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES, THE RIGHT TO FREELY ASSEMBLE, TO BUILD OUR PLACES OF WORSHIP, AND OUR CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CENTERS ACCORDING TO OUR NEEDS."

"THUS, WE MAKE THIS APPEAL TO THE IRAQI PEOPLE, RICH IN ETHNICITIES AND RELIGIONS, TO THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES, AS WELL AS TO EVERYONE WHO HAS THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY AT HEART, HENCE TO THE LEADERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY."

END INFORMAL EMBASSY TRANSLATION.

13. (SBU) COMMENT: THROUGHOUT THE IRAQ CRISIS, THE HOLY SEE HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED BY CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN IRAQ AND THE IMPACT OF A WAR WAGED BY A PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN WEST ON MUSLIM IRAQ. BEYOND THE IMPACT OF WAR, AN ADDITIONAL IMPLICIT CONCERN WAS THE RISK THAT AN IRAQ UNFETTERED BY SADDAM'S REPRESSION COULD TAKE A MORE FUNDAMENTALIST TURN THAT COULD LEAD TO NEW RESTRICTIONS ON CATHOLIC AND OTHER CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. AS NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE DEVELOPED, WE CAN EXPECT THE HOLY

SEE AND THE IRAQI BISHOPS TO REMAIN ACTIVE IN PROMOTING THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL GUARANTEES FOR
A MULTI-ETHNIC, RELIGIOUSLY TOLERANT GOVERNMENT.

NICHOLSON

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2003VATICA01880 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED